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BURUNDI REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

FACT SHEET

RELEASED IN FULL

I. NUMBERS: REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

- * **Old Refugees:** From 1972 - 1992, periodic inter-ethnic violence in Burundi resulted in several refugee outflows. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered 185,000 Burundi refugees in Tanzania (150,000), Rwanda (25,000) and Zaire (10,000). Most are self-sufficient and are no longer assisted by UNHCR.
- * **New Refugees:** Since October 1993, following the coup attempt and inter-ethnic violence, some 580,000 Burundis fled to neighboring countries. Approximately 200,000 returned to Burundi in early 1994. In mid-March, an additional 15,000 fled to Zaire following conflict in Bujumbura. UNHCR is now using the following numbers:

Rwanda:	260,000
Tanzania:	60,000
Zaire:	55,000

- * **Displaced Persons:** An estimated 1,000,000 persons have been displaced from their homes within Burundi due to the Hutu-Tutsi conflict. Some 250,000 are being assisted on a regular basis.

II. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

- * **Rwanda:** UNHCR is coordinating assistance to refugees in cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The World Food Program (WFP) is supplying food aid. The International Federation of Red Cross/Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Rwandan Red Cross are distributing food and non-food relief. Medecins sans Frontieres/Belgium and Holland (MSF), Medecins du Monde (MDM), and CARITAS are providing health care.
- * **Tanzania:** UNHCR is coordinating UN and NGO assistance to refugees. WFP is supplying food aid. Lutheran World Federation and its local partner, the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS), are distributing food and non-food relief. MSF/France and MSF/Belgium are providing medical services and supplies. CARITAS and CONCERN are providing some relief items. The IFRC and the Tanzanian Red Cross are assisting refugees in the Kagera region.
- * **Zaire:** UNHCR is coordinating UN and NGO relief activities. WFP is providing funds for the local purchase of food which is being distributed by the Catholic Diocese of Uvira. UNICEF is delivering water, and MSF/Holland is dealing with health and sanitation. OXFAM has provided some non-food relief for refugees.

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- * Burundi: UNDP, with assistance from the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), is coordinating UN assistance to displaced persons in Burundi. UNHCR is assisting returnees. WFP is providing food aid. ICRC is providing medical supplies and personnel to treat wounded and displaced in cooperation with MSF/Belgium. CARITAS and CRS are assisting in food distribution and health care.

III. USG ASSISTANCE

- * To date in FY94, State Department's Bureau for Refugee Programs (RP) has earmarked over \$5.5 million in response to appeals from organizations responding to the Burundi refugee crisis. Contributions are as follows:

UNHCR:	\$4,250,000
IFRC:	\$ 750,000
WFP:	\$ 502,700

RP has also made unearmarked contributions to UNHCR and ICRC 1993 and 1994 programs in Africa which include Burundi. RP contributed \$43 million for 1993 and \$41.7 million for 1994 to UNHCR's General Program for Africa. RP also contributed \$41.5 million to ICRC's 1993 Emergency Appeal for Africa.

- * In December 1994³, the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Humanitarian and Refugee Affairs airlifted over 9,000 blankets to Rwanda for UNHCR to distribute to Burundi refugees.
- * USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) provided over \$3 million for food and non-food relief within Burundi. USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) has authorized food contributions to WFP for the Burundi Regional Program valued at \$9 million.

IV. BACKGROUND

- * Burundi has long been plagued by violent ethnic conflict between the 14% minority Tutsi (in power until June 1993) and the 85% majority Hutu populations. Large-scale massacres occurred in 1972 causing mass refugee outflows. Additional conflict and smaller refugee movements occurred in 1988, 1991 and 1992.
- * On October 21, 1993, elements of the Burundi military launched an attempted coup d'etat against the democratically elected government of President Melchior Ndadaye. Ndadaye and several government officials were killed.

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- * Following the coup attempt, inter-ethnic violence broke out between Hutus and Tutsis. Thousands of people have reportedly been killed and wounded, and many villages have been burned. The conflict led at least 580,000 refugees from Burundi to flee to Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire.
- * An estimated 1,000,000 persons have been displaced within Burundi due to the Hutu-Tutsi conflict. Some 250,000, mainly Tutsi, are gathered in accessible areas. The remaining displaced, primarily Hutus, continue to hide out in the hills, inaccessible to the relief community.

v. CURRENT ISSUES

- * **High Death Rates among Refugees:** In late 1993 and early 1994, UNHCR reported high death rates (about 6 per 10,000 per day) among Burundi refugees in Rwanda as a result of disease and malnutrition attributed to extremely poor sanitation, over-crowding, and shortages of both potable water and food. Some 50% to 75% of the deaths were attributed to dysentery. Malnutrition was also a serious concern with nutritional surveys indicating between 13% to 20% of children under five as malnourished. By late March, conditions had reportedly improved but were still not satisfactory in some camps.
- * **Moving Refugees to New Sites:** In Rwanda, UNHCR is moving refugees to new sites to reduce over-crowding, improve sanitation and bring dysentery under control. UNHCR also established new, more accessible sites for refugees in Tanzania. Many refugees have chosen to remain near the Burundi border or to return home rather than move to camps.
- * **Refugee Repatriation:** Since early 1994, as many as 200,000 Burundi refugees may have returned to Burundi from Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire. Return is motivated by improved security in parts of Burundi as well as a desire to reclaim land and plant crops for the spring agricultural cycle. UNHCR is launching a program of assistance for returnees.

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